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SUBJECT: SLOVENES FOCUSED ON BALKANS AND REGIONAL
EXPANSIONS OF EU AND NATO

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Summary

11. (C) Slovene officials assured visiting EUR DAS Judy Garber October 4-5 that the GOS views the transatlantic relationship as vital even as it becomes increasingly immersed in the internal business of the EU Presidency. Garber welcomed Slovenia,s Presidency and stressed that the U.S. is looking for strong Slovene leadership on issues of strategic interest, including in the Balkans. Senior officials requested close cooperation with the U.S. on Kosovo and other issues. MFA interlocutors conveyed Slovenia,s support for NATO enlargement to include all three candidate countries. They urged the U.S. to actively engage wavering NATO members if it wants to achieve such a robust enlargement. End Summary.

Slovenes Ready to Get EU Presidency Underway

12. (C) Senior government officials are cognizant of the symbolism of Slovenia,s role as the first of the new accession countries to assume the EU presidency. Deputy Director of Slovenia's Government Office for European Affairs Gregor Krajc said that Slovenia is watching Portugal's progress and trying to anticipate what agenda Slovenia might inherit. He stressed that Slovenia recognizes the need to be flexible and improvise. Krajc noted that the EU calendar of meetings is officially closed except for important unforeseen events. Both he and MFA Director of EU Affairs Matej Marn indicated that the European Council might need to hold an informal meeting on Kosovo. They said there are currently 134 main events on Slovenia's calendar and 11 informal ministerials will take place in Slovenia. (Note: The GOS webpage indicates that Slovenia will preside over five summits, of which one, the proposed U.S.-EU summit, will be in Ljubljana; and will host eight informal ministerial meetings and 130 sub-ministerial meetings in Slovenia. End note.) Garber emphasized that the U.S. and Slovenia should maintain a strong dialogue in order to effectively address bilateral and regional issues.

Concern Over the Future of Kosovo

13. (C) All officials raised concerns regarding the future of Kosovo in meetings with Garber. Ambassador Roman Kirn, head of the Division for North and Latin America and the Caribbean, praised the U.S. for pushing the Serbs and Kosovars to talk, and emphasized that Slovenia wants to play a constructive and helpful role. State Secretary Matjaz Sinkovec, seconded by the Prime Minister to oversee European and transatlantic issues at the MFA, suggested that the EU must "harvest carrots" and offer them to Serbia to promote a European perspective in Serbia and in other parts of the Western Balkans. Stanislav Vidovic, Director of the Division for Security Policy at the MFA, and Sinkovec separately told us that Slovenia wanted to try to get Serbia on the EU path as quickly as possible, as it expects greater difficulties if, as expected, Kosovo declares unilateral independence. The British Ambassador told Garber that the Slovene desire to speed Serbia's EU candidacy was understandable, but not entirely helpful to other EU countries, efforts to press Serbia to cooperate fully with the International Criminal Tribunal in The Hague.

Energy and Climate Change Growing Issue

14. (C) Senior officials confirmed that Slovenia expected to tackle energy and climate change during its presidency. Krajc stated that Slovenia hoped to move forward on three goals: sustainability of energy supply, competitiveness, and energy security. On energy security, Slovenia plans to focus on internal markets for gas and electricity, as well as identifying new sources for renewable energy in Europe (with

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a debate on whether nuclear can be considered a renewable energy source.) Krajc added that he expected the European Council, which will be held in March 2008, to discuss energy and climate change issues. Russia's dominance in the European energy sector necessitates a strong push to look for alternative sources of energy. Many officials expressed concern that Russia appears to be trying to influence politics in Europe and the Western Balkans.

Eager to Host the U.S.-EU Summit

15. (SBU) High on the agenda of the Slovene officials was locking down a date for the U.S.-EU summit in the first half of 2008. Ambassador Kirn referred to the GOS-proposed dates in April and June 2008 and said the Government is hoping for information by November 2007. A Slovene daily surprised both Slovene and U.S. officials when it recently announced that a U.S.-EU summit would take place in Slovenia in March 2008. Garber clarified that the White House had not yet decided on the summit, but that she would follow up and provide any new information as soon as she could.

U.S. Must Take Lead on NATO Expansion

16. (C) Sinkovec and Vidovic expressed Slovenia's strong support for NATO enlargement and the accession of Croatia, Albania and Macedonia. Both stressed the need for stronger coordination between NATO and the EU in dealing with regional challenges. Vidovic suggested that if the U.S. wants to have all three candidate states accepted as NATO members, it must engage actively with wavering NATO members to make a strong case for the benefits of expansion. He said that in Slovenia's view, such enlargement would contribute to stability in the Balkans region and encourage Serbia to move faster towards integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions.

